

AN APPEAL
TO
POPULAR OPINION,
AGAINST
KIDNAPPING AND MURDER;
INCLUDING
A NARRATIVE
OF
The late Atrocious Proceedings,
AT
Yarmouth;
WITH
The Statements, Hand-Bills, &c. pro and con.

BY JOHN THELWALL.

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AN APPEAL, &c.

Introduction.

THERE is, perhaps, no single point of view, in which the affairs of Britain can, at this time, be regarded, which does not exhibit a prospect, more melancholy and alarming, than has ever existed since the æra of the Revolution. A mad and profligate system of continental politics has exhausted the resources of the nation, has drained it of its population and energy, and, what is still worse, has “slain the mind” of the country—has destroyed the proud zeal of boasted liberty, which once elevated the character of the people; and by associating them with the slaves of tyrants, and in the cause of tyranny, has rendered them degraded in their own eyes, and contemptible in those of Europe. The vaunted superiority of British valour is no more: Britain has lost her liberty; and it has been proved, that nations are only valiant in proportion as they are free. France, once the object of our scorn, has become our terror. She slept in slavery, and we scoffed at her weakness. She felt the Promethian torch of Liberty, and she has shown her giant might. She burst her chains, and Europe

confederated in arms to bind them on again: a fourth part of her own children proved rebellious to the holy cause of Freedom, and another fourth were necessarily employed to keep the rebels in check; and yet, with the remaining half, renovated France has vanquished the whole continent; and Britain, whose profligate ministers brewed the infernal storm, stands upon the brink of her yet unravaged shores, pondering, with anxious expectation, over the fate in which she may be involved by the next explosion. Yes; the storm thickens; cloud gathers to cloud; combustion to combustion. The interior of France is no more distracted. The banditti of La Vendé are no more in our alliance. The bayonets of Brittany are turned against us. The pikes of the Chouans, and the scythes of the no-longer deluded peasants point, with threatening impatience, towards our shores; and a swarm of profligate and desperate emigrants are waiting, perhaps, for an opportunity to make their peace with their country, by plunging the sword into the bosom that fostered them. In the mean time, the irritated Republic encloses us with a moon-like battery; a narrow sea is all that separates this enervated, dispirited, and exhausted nation from the legions which have broken in pieces the disciplined phalanx of Germany, and trampled in the dust the military glory of centuries; and on this *precarious* element the navies of France, Spain and Holland combine for our humiliation. At home the sinews of power are torn asunder.—Our population is exhausted, our manufactures are palsied, our commerce is threatened with annihilation, our public credit is shaken to its foundations, our specie is vanishing, paper circulation maintains its standard with difficulty, our loan contractors are reduced

to every shuffling expedient to fulfil, or to postpone, their engagements with Government, and the funds themselves, if not "in the gulph," are, at least, "on the very verge of bankruptcy;" while the public creditors behold with terror, that, if they should dare to associate or meet for the purpose of devising means for the security of their property, the ministers and their myrmidons are armed with authority to disperse them by proclamation, or pay off their demands by military execution.

At the same time, the state is diseased in every pore. Order and government exist no longer to any beneficial purpose. Taxes, it is true, are levied, malcontents are dragooned, highwaymen are hanged, and magistrates are protected by troops of guards, and carriages made bullet proof; but the peace of society is not preserved; nor is the life, the property, or the privilege of the Citizen protected from fraud or savage depredation. The police is organized into a complete system Espionage, and spies and informers are marshalled and stationed in every district: but while opinions are fettered, crimes go free; and in every class and situation of society are to be found daring banditti who act, in the broad face of day, upon the maxim promulgated from the treasury bench, and, confiding in the connivance or the impotence of magistracy, "exert an authority beyond the law."

To what insults and depredations is not the country subjected? And what can be the source of this horrible depravity? We talk of civilization; but the most dreadful barbarism pre-

vails. Twenty four millions of money are annually paid for government; and a most enormous debt is contracted by our legislators and rulers; the prisons are crammed, and gibbets are incessantly groaning; and yet Westminster Justices are filling huge octavoes with catalogues of incorrigible offences; and provincial mayors behold, by the long hour, banditti of plunderers and armed assassins committing every atrocious depredation upon promiscuous multitudes of men, women and children, and suffer them at last, to retire, uninterrupted in martial array, chaunting the songs of victory, and bearing the trophies of their premeditated violence, in triumph to their ships.

“There is something rotten in the state of Denmark”—some vital disease in the very bowels of the system, when such things can be acted: something I fear which nothing less than complete renovation can eradicate. The renovation, however, may come even from the inveterate obstinacy of the malady itself. In the mean time, palliatives may be sought, but I fear they will be sought in vain.

In the instance of the particular symptom which gives rise to this pamphlet, I understand a partial remedy of this kind will be attempted. A court of law will be applied to for redress, by some of the injured parties. I am glad it will be so; because such application will at least give publicity to the facts, and place an authenticated statement of the affair upon record. But further than this, I freely confess, that I despair of justice in such a case. If justice were administered with an even hand, such events never could take place. And where they can take place, what is the meaning of

government and civilized society? To talk of compensation in a court of law, is mockery and insult. There is no compensation for broken limbs, for kidnapping and murder. And if there were, how is it to be sought? Several of the persons, injured in this wicked outrage, are fortunately men of considerable property: but would they have been less entitled to redress if they had been labourers and mechanics? And yet how would such men have been able to advance their hundreds—perhaps thousands, for the prosecution of public depredators, or conniving magistrates? For my own part I confess, I must leave to others, who can afford to purchase it, the costly luxury of legal justice, while I, with democratical frugality, appeal to the more accessible tribunal of public opinion.



NARRATIVE.

THE nation is, I trust, by this time aware, and the advisers of those measures are evidently not ignorant, that the late Acts, by which our constitutional liberties have been so alarmingly invaded, are totally inadequate to the suppression of those principles of Truth and Political Justice, which animate the soul and direct the labours of the sincere Reformer. Political Associations are, in reality, rather organized than prohibited. More than forty-nine persons must not, it is true, meet together for the discussion of grievances in church and state, or to petition for the repeal of any obnoxious law, without the controlling censorship of a Magistrate: but every village, town, and street, may have its *society of forty-nine*; and these may legally confederate together, by deputations, committees, and sub-committees; and if the delegations are but so organized and divided, that more than the specific number do not meet together, there is no legal impediment to prevent the whole nation from being combined in one grand political Association, or Corresponding Society, from the Orkneys to the Thames, from the Cliffs of Dover to the Land's End, in Cornwall. Whether the exigences, or the spirit of the nation, will produce so grand an affiliation, time must reveal; but I will venture to pronounce, that it would not be the less powerful for being divided into sections of forty-nine.

In the mean time it behoves us, in all states of society, and especially in the present, to consider what are the means of public instruction; and if much is taken away from us, to make a diligent application of whatever may still remain. In this respect, also, we shall find that some very valuable provinces of political information still lay open before us; and that if the minds of our fellow Citizens do not continue to be improved in the principles of Legislation, and a knowledge of the arts and corruptions of Governments, it must be from the want of courage on the one hand, and curiosity on the other, and not from any moral impracticability or legal prevention. Reason may be said, it is true, to be curbed and restricted in her career; but the speed of the generous coarser is rather urged than impeded by the bitt; and perhaps the philosopher would rather rejoice than repine at being compelled to abandon personality for principle, local prejudices for universal philanthropy, and temporary feelings for the steady and immutable dictates of Nature: and such is, in some degree, the case with the moral and political instructor, who prohibited from speculating on the events and practices of his own time and country, is necessitated to pursue his principle through the regions of ancient and foreign history. The question is then no longer of Pitt or Fox, of Paine or Brunswick; but of right or wrong, just or unjust, wise or unwise. Partialities and Resentments lose their force; the mists of passion are dissipated, and the temple of truth is seen through a clearer atmosphere.

Such are the circumstances under which we are placed by the new Acts, with respect to oral

investigation. Every man who will take the trouble to make himself acquainted with ancient or foreign history, may discuss, with the utmost freedom, every political principle, and every question connected with the good government and permanent happiness of the human race. He must not apply his arguments, it is true, to this particular country, nor illustrate them by the flying reports and occurrences of the day; but ancient history will abundantly furnish him with illustrations, much more interesting to the strong and noble feelings of the heart; and if the Orator is at all adroit in the management of his subject, he will find reason to exult in the many and grand advantages for the display of genuine and impassioned eloquence, which historical discussion possesses over the local topics to which our public speakers have hitherto confined their attention.

In conformity with these reflections, the bills had no sooner passed, than I determined to resume my station in the tribune, and having, in my "Prospectus of a Course of Lectures," &c. shown the legality of such an expedient, to illustrate by example, the doctrine I had laid down, and *once more* to break through the charm of timid silence, which the wizard arm of ministerial terror had imposed upon the nation. To me, indeed, if I may be allowed to say so, this experiment particularly belonged. In the great struggle of Freedom against power, every man should chuse his particular province, and fight his particular battle: and, though he should at all times be ready to render assistance wherever it may be required, he should take especial care that his own post is not undefended. The province in which my tastes, my habits, and the circum-

stances under which I have been placed, seem to have enabled me to be most usefully employed, is the vindication of the sacred LIBERTY OF SPEECH: and if I am disposed to indulge the proud boast of having twice, with unassisted effort, recovered this important station, when apparently subjected and destroyed by municipal intrigue, and ministerial usurpation, it may abate the edge of envy to recollect the dangers, the difficulties, and the heart-achs with which my laurels have been reaped, and still must be maintained.

There was another reason, also, which particularly called upon me on this occasion. It was evident from the tenor of the Bills alluded to, and from the gross and slanderous misrepresentations of my conduct and sentiments reiterated during the discussion, from the treasury bench, and by the treasury scribblers, that a principal object with the first advisers of these measures was to stop my tongue entirely, and consign me to ignominious silence, with a load of obloquy upon my *offending* head. It was my duty, therefore, as much as possible, to prevent the liberties of my country from being wounded through my sides; and, if I must, indeed, be silenced, to drive those men who are afraid of the truths I utter, to avow at once their object and their fears, by enacting, in direct terms, "that John Thelwall shall open his mouth in public no more." Till they have been thus explicit, I trust I shall find means to propagate my principles: for I feel an honest confidence, that my principles are such, as not even the present administration would venture at once fairly to state and openly to condemn. They

are principles, indeed, which corruption must, of necessity dread, but which corruption does not dare to publish to the world, in prohibitory Laws and Parliamentary Debates: for such is the moral beauty of truth, that she need but be seen in her native simplicity, to be admired by all but those who have an interest in upholding deformity, vice, and imposture. Such is the reason why the apparently unbounded power of the ruling faction has so frequently been impotent in its resentments: for what they wished to destroy, it was impossible to condemn; and being obliged to depend upon the bugbears of misrepresentation, they have been bewildered among the monsters themselves created; and, striking at their own pageants, what wonder if their blows have not reached their intended victims.

The nature of the Course of Lectures I determined to deliver under this new arrangement, was sufficiently explained in the "Prospectus" before referred to, and its legality was so evident that, though I never dissembled that my object was to instruct my hearers in the principles of Government, and the nature of political institution, the Magistrates, the Crown Lawyers, and the Government Reporters acquiesced, and left me to the uninterrupted pursuit of my plan; and, if report says true, the great Divan itself, after solemn deliberation, admitted that my Law was sound, and my interpretation of the statute incontrovertible.

Having established my point in London, I was persuaded to turn my eyes towards the provinces, and accepted an invitation to the city of Norwich, where a course of two and twenty lectures has been delivered to an audience, com-

posed of all the different classes of society, and, with a degree of impression, surpassing any thing I have ever witnessed before, in any place, or upon any occasion. My stay in this City was also endeared by the intercourse of a most agreeable and intelligent circle of society, and the flattering conviction that the prejudices so artfully excited against me, were regularly diminished in proportion as my real sentiments and feelings became more generally known. In the mean time I was not indifferent to the general interests of liberty, and the importance of political associations in particular, in the surrounding neighbourhoods; and I neglected no opportunity that offered of meeting *any legal number* of the friends of freedom, for the purpose of explaining the restrictions and provisions of the late acts, and pointing out to them under what circumstances they might still associate, and what means were still left for the promotion of the great work of Parliamentary Reform.

With a view to this object I paid a short visit to Yarmouth, where two parties were formed, one in the morning, and the other in the afternoon, for the purpose of meeting me; each of them consisting of *less than fifty persons*. At the latter of these some people were present, who have been generally ranked with what is called the moderate party: nor were these the characters least pleased with the sentiments I endeavoured to enforce. In short, they were men of real moderation; and the circumstance is not, therefore, surprising: for there is not a term in the English language which has been more wickedly abused than this. Moderation of temper is certainly a most excellent quality, and no man can be a friend to human li-

berty, who does not preserve it with benevolent solicitude; but moderation of principle is sheer nonsense: or, more properly speaking, rank hypocrisy. In plain fact, every principle is either right or wrong; and between right and wrong there is no mid-way, no moderation! But what is most remarkable is that the *moderes* in principle are, in general, most sanguinary in their sentiments, as to the means of attaining their object. This is not extraordinary, for men, not measures, are their concern; and those who wish only for a change of parties, may make their way through the blood of a rival faction; but the man of principle knows, that destroying the oppressor does not remove the oppression; and that revenge is not reform. Add to which, that the man who is well-grounded in a consistent principle, feels a necessary confidence in the omnipotency of reason, and has nothing to wish but that argument should have full scope. The mere word moderation has, however, an inseparable charm, and the epithet "violent" so frequently, though unjustly, applied to the thorough-paced reformer, has, undoubtedly, alienated many a sincere and worthy man from the party of truth. In proportion as we come to be better understood, these delusions will be dissipated, and it will be found who are the true friends of moderation—the genuine advocates of peace, good order, and humanity. In consequence of the impression produced by this visit, I received a second invitation to Yarmouth, and had now the satisfaction to meet several persons, who had not before mingled in our conversations; and who, from their characters, connections, and influence in the town, were looked up to with respect by the inhabitants in general. Two or three evenings hav-

ing been spent in this private manner, a mingled feeling of esteem and indignation, as in several other instances that I might mention, was excited by the contrast exhibited between the sentiments and feelings evinced in my conversation, and those which a base and interested misrepresentation has usually ascribed to persons of our way of thinking, and to myself in particular; and a desire was pretty generally expressed that my sentiments should be more publicly delivered. I accordingly consented to change my subject, from English to Roman history, and to illustrate my principles to any number of persons that should chuse to assemble; the persons above alluded to being of opinion, that there was no probability of any attempt towards disturbance, *among the people of the town*; and who could suspect that in a place, protected by two regiments of soldiers, a corporation of grave magistrates, and a regular police, a body of sailors could have been deputed from on board the ships of war in the roads for the purposes of tumult and outrage?

It will be naturally supposed, that I was in some degree gratified to find that curiosity was rather inflamed, than satiated by this compliance; and that I readily assented to the proposition with which it was followed, that I should shortly return to the town, and deliver a *Course of Lectures* on Classical History there: especially when this invitation was accompanied with the offer of a warehouse belonging to one of the principal merchants in the place, and a liberal subscription to fit it up for my accommodation. To have refused such an invitation, would have been inconsistent with the zeal I have always professed for the spread of information. Several of my friends at Norwich, it

is true, were apprehensive that some personal violence would be attempted by the rancorous aristocrats, who, it was suspected, might find in the vessels laying in the roads, fit instruments of their diabolical vengeance. I was, however, disposed to believe, that such attempts surpassed the profligacy of the British character; and, taking only the precaution of being constantly armed, I obeyed the summons of duty, and repaired to a place, where every circumstance had convinced me, that if there was some danger to be encountered, there was much good to be done.

The state of society in Yarmouth is indeed one, in which great advantage to the cause of liberty is to be expected from any undertaking that may tend to provoke discussion. There is, indeed, as might be expected, a great deal of torpor and lethargy among the people; but there is at the same time less vulgarity and brutal licentiousness than I have ever seen before in any sea-port town. (It is to be remarked, however, that it is but very lately that ships of war have been in the habit of laying in the roads.) There is, also, a sort of comparative equality in the condition of the inhabitants. The links of the progressive chain of society are not yet broken. There are no towering and gigantic fortunes on the one hand, and but little want and abject wretchedness on the other; and there is a good body of decent substantial families filling up the intermediate space between the merchants and the mechanics. Into such a state of society, particular circumstances may occasion it to be long before a knowledge of just and liberal principles finds its way; but when such principles are once adopted, through a society so constituted they must of course be rapidly diffused. The only

circumstance unfavourable to the cultivation of just notions of liberty, is the influence of the corporation. This institution is, of course, an aristocratic confederacy of alarmers and alarmists : and, what is still worse, from the character and situation of its members, it is of necessity dependent upon the faction in power, and has, therefore, a two-fold interest in terrifying the people from the pursuit of knowledge by the cabalistic yell of "Innovation and Anarchy!"* Their influence is, however, confined to the artificial advantages of their corporate character. As individuals, they have little of that sway or interest which arises either from capacity, education, personal attachment, or even property ; and the families most beloved for their good qualities, most esteemed for their understandings, and most powerful by the extent of their commerce and connections, are in actual opposition to this *constituted club*, and obnoxious to them on account of the more liberal system of politics, to which they have uniformly leaned. In short, such is the state of society in Yarmouth, that the principles of liberty need only to be understood, and they must be immediately adopted : for they are in perfect unison with the interests of almost every individual in the town, *their reverences* of the church, and *their worships* of the corporation alone excepted.

Such was the view of the subject which occasioned me to accept with eagerness the invitation, and even to give Yarmouth the preference over some other more populous places to which I had been also invited ; especially, as at that time, it being the height of the watering sea-

* It will be seen in the sequel who are the real anarchists !

fon, and the town full of company, from a variety of different quarters, I thought it probable that the principles I was anxious to promulgate might spread through a wider circle from such a centre, than even in a place where a larger audience might be expected: a calculation, in which the attendance of the three first evenings proved I was not erroneous.

To Yarmouth, accordingly, I again repaired; and my Lectures were announced by the publication of the following bill, which was posted in the most conspicuous parts of the Town, and distributed among the inhabitants;—

“ Lectures on Classical History, illustrative of the Principles of Legislation and Practices of Governments; in strict conformity with Mr. Pitt’s Convention Act.

“ At the Lecture Room, on the Walls, in the South-end, Yarmouth, on Monday, August 15, 1796, John Thelwall will commence a Course of six Lectures, on the History, Political Institutions, and Revolutions of Rome.

“ The Lectures will be delivered on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.”—&c.

That considerable animosity was excited in the breasts of the high-toned aristocratic party, by the publication of this bill I have no doubt: for I have been too deeply injured by the oppressors, ever to expect to be forgiven; and the tools of corruption need but half an eye to discover that it is impossible to descant with freedom upon any subject of history, or of morals, without unveiling the system of fraud and usurpation, and, consequently, endangering their trade.

But whatever might be their animosity, it is evident that their party in the town was very small; for I walked about the streets in the most public manner, without the least insult, both before and after the Lectures were commenced; and even after the outrage at the Lecture Room had been committed. In short, it was evident that among the town's-people there was not the least disposition to tumult; and that if we could have procured a Room in the center, or the inland part of the Town, it would have been impossible for all the priests and excisemen in the place to have occasioned any disturbance or interruption. But our situation towards the sea, subjected us to many inconveniences and insults; and at last to most atrocious outrage. A plot of most unparalleled atrocity was formed, against which it was impossible for us to be guarded; because it was impossible for us to suspect, on the one hand, that a project of such mad and diabolical wickedness could have entered into the heads of any set of men; or, on the other, that the police of any civilized town could have suffered it to be carried into execution.

Where, or with whom, the plan first originated, or to what extent of wickedness it was intended to be carried, is not yet accurately known. That it was intended to carry me off is certain: but whether I was to have been murdered, or *only* transported to Siberia, further investigation must ascertain. To the Commander of one of the Ships of War, in the Roads, the plot is already traced; and it is now known that he had it in agitation for several days; that he invited some military Officers to join in the undertaking; and

that upon their refusal, he determined to execute it himself. This ruffian, Captain Roberts, of L'Espiegle, (whom I have since seen, and who had the audacity, in the hearing of some persons in company with me, to threaten a repetition of the outrage) stands positively charged with making a formal harangue to his crew, issuing his orders for the attack, sending off his men in the ship's boats, to the number of five or six and thirty, (who were joined by others on the shore; the whole gang consisting, as has been ascertained, of about ninety persons) giving them directions with respect to furnishing themselves with bludgeons and other weapons for the purpose, and sending some of the inferior officers to command them.

The banditti, thus armed, thus authorised, and thus marshalled (after having had each as much brandy as he would drink,) set forward upon this honourable expedition, chafing and chopping at every person in their way. One man in particular, who was standing near the door, narrowly escaped with his life: for one of the officers chopped at his throat with a cutlass, and cut through the knots and folds of a silk handkerchief which was tied about his neck. They then attacked the door in a body, knocked down the door keepers, and rushed into the room. The scene that ensued has been very accurately described in the *Courier* of the ensuing Monday; and as I shall have occasion hereafter to refer to that narrative, I shall here insert it entire.

From the Courier, Monday, August, 22, 1796.

Yarmouth.—"On Friday evening last was exhibited at this place, a scene of tumult and sanguine-

nary wickedness, the most daring and atrocious which has ever disgraced even the present æra of ferocity and terror, without excepting even the riots of Birmingham and Manchester. Hitherto the utmost fury of a Church and King mob had never gone further than the demolition of a few houses, and a *threat* against the life of some obnoxious individual. To attempt the indiscriminate massacre of a peaceful assembly of upwards of two hundred people, men, women and children, who were violating no law, and disturbing no man's comforts or possessions, would have called a blush upon the cheek even of the *Septembrizers* of France. If there is any such thing as justice left in the country, this affair must be made a subject of public inquiry; and if the assassins and conspirators are not brought to condign punishment, to talk any more of the laws and liberties of Britons, will be adding insult to oppression.

“ The history of the transaction is as follows: Thelwall, who has been for some time delivering a Course of Lectures on Classical History, and particularly on the Laws and Revolutions of Rome, at Norwich, received a strong invitation from several of the principal inhabitants of Yarmouth, to repeat a part of them, at least, in that town. Mr. Hurry, one of the first merchants in the place, having lent one of his warehouses for the purpose, and several gentlemen having entered into a subscription to fit it up in a proper way, Thelwall accepted the invitation.

“ On the first and second nights, which were on Monday and Wednesday last, a party was formed, consisting of two or three *Clergymen*,

some Officers of the Militia (most of them *disguised* in coloured clothes,) a fellow employed to look after the Emigrants, and a hanger-on or two (place expectants) of Government, who attempted to breed disturbance *in* the Lecture Room, while a parcel of boys without, instigated by a Naval Officer, who offered them five guineas if they would pull down the house, cooperated with the detachment within, by all the noise and uproar they were capable of making. The disturbers, however, were put to complete confusion, by the firmness, general concord, and discreet good-humour of the company, and were, at the same time, made the objects of so much ridicule and pastime, that they were obliged to abandon this mode of attack: and at the same time, a new entrance being made through an adjacent building, the noise of the people without was effectually excluded. The third night arrived, and a tremendous night it was. Upwards of 200 auditors, of both sexes, and of all ages, mostly very genteel people, assembled, and the Lecture proceeded for some time with the utmost tranquillity.

“Of all who had been remarked for their interruptions and expressions of disapprobation on the former evening, Cammon Money was the only person present; who, when the lecture had been going on for about a quarter of an hour, took out his watch to observe the time, and immediately departed, not without some rude expressions of insult and contempt to the person who kept the door. About five minutes after this a great disturbance was heard at the door, and in rushed a desperate banditti of about ninety sailors, as their numbers stand

ascertained by regular depositions. These desperadoes, drafted from the different ships of war in the roads, and armed with bludgeons and cutlasses, after having cut and knocked down the persons who guarded the door, and even the mere gazers who happened to be loitering about, poured in among the audience with the most wild ferocity, dealing their blows indiscriminately upon man, woman and child, who, totally unprepared for resistance, were knocked down across the benches with terrible wounds and bruises; and a scene of fashion, gaiety, and pleasure was instantly metamorphosed into one of carnage and horror, of fractured heads, and garments covered over with blood. A general massacre seemed to be inevitable; no means either of defence or escape presented themselves; and the ruffians, not satisfied with knocking people down, reiterated their blows as they lay prostrate at their feet.

“ In the midst of this scuffle, the lights were knocked out by some of the desperadoes; and darkness and horror, shrieks and groans, clashing of weapons and resounding blows filled the room.

“ At length some people without, tore open a pair of large folding doors, which had been formerly the only entrance to the room, but which had been fastened up that night, for the reasons before-mentioned, and the people began to rush out through the bludgeons of the murderers, some of whom pursued them to the walls, scattering and knocking them down; while others, recollecting at last, the principal object of their fury, began to cry out, “ Where’s the parson? damn him, where’s the parson?” The Lecturer, however, had taken the opportunity

of the bustle at the great door, which opened towards the sea, to rush out at the small door, by which the ruffians had entered. But the danger was not yet over. Six or seven of the ruffians were keeping watch at the door, and by these he was immediately seized, but it is remarkable, that the only violence they shewed towards their prisoner, was that of grappling very hard to prevent his escape, to effect which he struggled very resolutely.

“ Two of the fellows, it seems, immediately went round to their companions, to inform them that the victim was seized; but in the mean time some of the town's-people collecting, and recognizing him, exclaimed, “ It is Thelwall,—let us rescue him!” and immediately rushing forward, knocked down the fellow who was on the right hand, and grappled with those who were on the other side, endeavouring to drag him towards the sea. At the same time, T. clapping a pistol to the head of the most resolute of them, and exclaiming, “ Offer the least violence, and you're a dead man!” the banditti let go their hold, and he escaped to the house of Mr. Norton.”

[Among the persons to whom I am indebted for this rescue, I am happy to particularise Mr. T. Hurry Jun. and two of the younger Mr. Palmers; and it is but a tribute of justice to say, that I never saw any thing more gallantly executed in my life. The ruffians had all of them formidable bludgeons; the persons who rescued me, few in number, were most of them entirely unarmed, and none of them provided with any thing more than a small walking stick; yet my name was no sooner pronounced, than they rushed forward, with one mind, and with an enthusiasm

truly admirable, and grappling with the desperadoes, disentangled me from their gripe.]

“ At length, the company being completely dispersed, the ruffians procured a light, and roaring out “ God save the king,” with great ardour and exultation, proceeded to plunder and destroy; and hats, shawls and great coats in abundance, were carried on board the frigates from which they had been detached, together with general articles of value, which lay stowed up in a detached part of the warehouse. As for the books from which the lecture was delivered, and which consisted of the “ Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus,” “ Plutarch’s Lives,” and Moyle’s Treatise on “ the Lacedemonian Government;” they were torn into a thousand pieces by these new inquisitors of literature and public instruction.

“ The first persons who escaped from this long conflict, applied immediately to the mayor, then at the assembly, for assistance to suppress the riot; but, instead of being attended to, one of them was threatened himself with commitment, and one of the persons in company with this chief magistrate indecently exclaimed, and met with no rebuke, that “ it served the people right; and as for the damned lecturer, he hoped they would beat him to pieces.” At length the mayor slightly answered to one of the applications that was made—“ Well, lord Spencer may send the soldiers if he pleases.” But as it is well known, that the military cannot act without the presence of the magistrate, lord Spencer was obliged to decline making use of this verbal *permission*.

“ At length, the rioters having effectually gratified their vengeance against the Lecture Room,

began to mark out private houses for destruction, and their shouts announced the very house in which the Lecturer had sought for refuge as the next object of destruction. Their threats, however, were not put into immediate execution; and at half past nine o'clock, (an hour and a half later than usual) the signal guns, which call all hands on board, relieved the town from the agitation in which it had been kept for near two hours.

“It is believed that in the darkness and confusion, the ruffians actually murdered one of their own gang, and carried him just expiring on board. But except this be true, no actual murder was committed, though one fine youth of about fourteen, an only child of one of the inhabitants, has received contusions on the head, of which, from all present symptoms, it is concluded he must certainly die.

[This is a mistake, I believe; he is not the son of an inhabitant; but a visitor in the town. In other respects the statement is but too accurate; and so alarming are the symptoms, that I understand, the physician who attends him has declared, that he will not pronounce him out of danger these six weeks.]

“Forty-one persons (I believe it ought to have been between thirty and forty) were very materially wounded; among whom are Christopher Atkinson, Esq. M. P.—Hollock, Esq. of Cambridge, one of the officers of the militia, and the collector of the customs at this place; many others, both men and women, have received slighter injuries. But, notwithstanding the explicit depositions which have been made against some of the rioters, the mayor has refused to grant warrants against them.

“The inhabitants have had several meetings. It is resolved to continue and countenance the Lectures, which will be repeated this evening. We may therefore expect to hear more from Yarmouth; but we hope for intelligence of a more peaceable kind.”

This account is so far from being exaggerated, that it has been more than substantiated by the particular depositions of many credible witnesses: but as the family of the Hurrys and other respectable inhabitants of the town, have taken up the affair with great spirit, and determine to make it a subject of legal enquiry, I forbear, in delicacy to the parties, to enter further into the minutiae, till the Courts of Law have done their office.

The affair, however, was, as might be expected, made the subject of a sort of paper war. The truth, as is generally the case, was too disgraceful to the aristocratic party to be endured; and the most slanderous falsehoods were invented to cover a part of the infamy; and that the reader may be the better enabled to form an impartial judgment, I shall insert these accounts in my pamphlet also; referring him for further confirmation of the preceding statement, to the Cambridge Intelligencer, and the Bury and Norwich Post. The editor of which latter paper was himself a spectator of the whole transaction.

It is, however, necessary for me first to observe, that it was immediately resolved by the persons who had particularly countenanced the lectures, not to abandon them in consequence of this outrage. They had observed nothing in the sentiments I delivered, or the subjects I investigated,

hostile to the peace or morals of society; and they justly decided, that to be driven by bludgeons and cutlasses from enquiries, which neither the laws of society nor those of virtue prohibited, would be to surrender even the little liberty which is left us, and advertise to the world, that our oppressors have nothing to do but to cudgel us, and we shall of course submit. We therefore determined to go on; and one of the inhabitants of the town (a man whose virtues and intrepidity, I will venture to prophecy, will rescue his name from oblivion, and one day confer essential benefits upon society) published the following address.

“TO THE INHABITANTS OF YARMOUTH.

“FELLOW-TOWNSMEN,

“While force is used for argument, and brutality for reason, despotism may dictate, and tyrants may exult: but when passion is exhausted, and prejudice put away, the still, small voice of conscience will be heard, and atrocity be regarded with the horror it deserves. The outrage against justice, against law, society, and humanity, lately perpetrated, at THELWALL'S LECTURE, against our peaceable and well-disposed Fellow-Town's-men, against their unoffending wives, sisters, and children, will be told with execration, and long remembered with abhorrence; and its authors (all of whom the unveiling hand of time will exhibit to public odium) will be classed amongst the most despicable and cowardly assassins of the eighteenth century. While posterity read the account, they will marvel, that some human beings should be so immersed in wickedness, as to attempt to vindicate, much less applaud the transaction. Yet, Fellow-Town's-men, strange, inconsistent, and brutal as it may appear, there are persons, even in this town, who applaud an action, which Robespierre himself would have blushed to have planned! A band of ruffians, armed with cutlasses, bludgeons, pipestaves, and other destroying weapons, knocked down the door-keeper, and burst into a room, in which were two hundred persons *peaceably* and *legally* assembled, and cut, beat down, and maimed men, women, and children promiscuously; having, on their entrance, extinguished the lights, that neither the softness of sex, the feebleness of age, nor the innocence

of childhood might check their ferocity: and only the bursting of the great doors prevented that assassination in the dark, which their employers and instigators even now contemplate with malignant satisfaction. Happy do I feel myself to announce, that after the strictest enquiry, I find not one of the company was murdered; though many are so much injured, as to render their recovery a work of time. It will, doubtless, afford satisfaction to many, to let them know the affair is in a train of legal investigation. Look up, then, with confidence, to a period, not very distant, when ignorance and villainy shall cease to triumph over legality and innocence; and "when the Wicked shall go away into Punishment, but the steadfast in Heart shall be made glad."

A TOWNSMAN.

"August 22, 1796.

"THELWALL's friends have requested him to go on with his Lectures: in consequence of which, he will begin at half-past five o'clock this evening, and continue them on Wednesday and Friday next, at the same hour. It is wished the frequenters of the lectures may attend early, that by uniting firmness and discretion, the triumph of peaceful reason over brutal violence may be effectually established."

The reader may, indeed, well be surprised to hear, that any human being should applaud such a transaction; but his wonder will increase when he hears, that some of these applauders were to be found among the members of the corporation themselves, and that others were sanctified with the holy fables of religion—the meek preachers of the gospel of peace, forbearance and mild morality. Nay, what is most curious, one gentleman of the former description took upon himself to be loud in reprobation of one of the town's people, for "having dared (for the preservation of his own life) twice to present a pistol at a king's officer," whose cutlass was uplifted for his destruction! So that according to these loyal gentlemen, if the men who are hired with the people's money to defend the country, chuse to turn their swords

like murderous assassins, against the breasts of those who feed them, and the magistrates do not choose to interfere for our preservation, we are to submit without resistance to our fate—to stretch forth our unresisting necks, and exclaim, with loyal humility, “Cut our throats, good sirs, we pray you, if it suits your pleasure; for you are King’s Officers, and licensed therefore to murder us poor *subjects* when you choose.”

The bill I have above quoted produced the following answer: which, if report says true, was produced by the inventive genius of a reverend divine of Norwich. I shall only observe, that the whole of the *narrative* is such a monstrous string of falsehoods, as nobody but a priest could have put together; and the reader will observe, that the narrator himself confesses (so accurate, so certain is his intelligence) that he does not know whether the sailor, whom he has conjured up, called out for a loyal song, *or* indulged himself in hissing.

“ TO THE INHABITANTS OF GREAT YARMOUTH.

“ FELLOW-SUBJECTS,

“ A *virulent hand-bill* having just made its appearance, in which the voice of passion seems to prevail over the dictates of reason, permit one of your sincere friends, though not one of your Fellow-Town’s-men, to warn you against the injurious insinuations which it contains. Were you to listen to the flourishes of oratory, and the ravings of declamation, you would be taught to believe that a horrid plot had been formed to assassinate two hundred of the inhabitants of this town, who were *legally* and *peaceably* assembled in attendance on an innocent lecture. How far any assemblies can properly be termed *legal* and *peaceable*, where, as it is well known, in defiance, or in evasion of the laws of the realm, such doctrines are disseminated as have a manifest tendency to undermine the established

government, and consequently to unsheath the sword of domestic discord, I leave it to the consciences of those who attend them to determine. That these doctrines may be concealed under *the mask of hypocrisy*, is so far from diminishing, that it aggravates their criminality, and every loyal subject sees with sorrow and indignation, that those pernicious opinions on Politics and Religion, which have ruined a neighbouring kingdom, carried fire and slaughter through the world, and produced a train of evils, from the recital of which humanity recoils with abhorrence, are still preached in this happy country, *not indeed with the manly hardiness of open effrontery*, but under *the specious veil of classical allusion*—a veil, by which folly and ignorance alone can be deceived. Such is the light in which Mr. THELWALL and his Lectures are generally considered by the many loyal inhabitants of this place. A person, whose conduct has rendered him so notorious, and whose encomiums on the present government of France, have led some people to suppose him a *pensioner* of that country, makes his appearance in this peaceable and loyal town, and advertises his Lectures on "*The Practices of Governments.*" What is the natural result of such a proceeding? A glow of loyal and virtuous indignation is excited. At one of his Lectures, a sailor calls out for "God save the King!" or hisses what he conceives to be seditious language. He is insulted and threatened to be turned out. He makes his retreat in the best manner he is able, and moved, perhaps, partly by personal and partly by public motives, he returns to his comrades, and forms a party *for the purpose, I believe, of seizing the Orator, and conveying him aboard a Man of War.* The party is formed, and at his next Lecture, they rush into the room, and make their way towards the Preacher. False to the heroism he inculcates, he immediately sinks down from his pulpit, and *himself* extinguishes the only lights in the room, thus saving his own person, and exposing those of his audience. A tumult then ensues, in which several people are wounded, and the accommodations of the Lecture-Room overturned. *Many people have since regretted, that instead of attacking the audience, the crew had not succeeded in their first design of securing the Lecturer, and pressing him, for a time at least, into the service of his king.* This account, I have reason to believe, is more accurate than any that has yet been given of a transaction, which has been represented (perhaps by one of the sufferers) in so atrocious a light.

"Now, God forbid! that any man should attempt to justify an outrage against the laws of his country, or to rejoice in the sufferings of innocence.

*[Compare this with the regret expressed above.—
Phaugh! how I scent the holy fox in this unsavory
odour of hypocrisy!]*

Such a conduct would, indeed, be but too similar to those French models, which Democracy has held up to our imitation. But it is not inconsistent with reason or charity to maintain, that whatever riots take place at Lectures, the general spirit of which is so well understood, the Lecturer himself, and those who sanction his harangues, are to be considered as their primary cause. They draw down that vengeance on their heads, to which, however unjustifiable in its mode, a more loyal conduct could not possibly have exposed them.

[Precious sophist! He who dares to exercise his rights, contrary to the inclinations of his oppressors, is accountable for all the wickedness which those oppressors, in the rancour of their hearts, may think fit to perpetrate against him!]

"This, my friends, is an important period. It is a time, in which no good subject ought to disguise the real sentiments of his heart. Let him avow them openly and firmly, but *with that charity which true religion inspires*. While the audacious enemy threatens without, let him guard against the insidious foe within; and let him mark those who walk contrary to the spirit of the British constitution, that he may avoid their example. Let him not, however, be alarmed. The great majority of the people of this country, are attached to their religion and their king. Democracy raises its voice among us, and endeavours to gain converts to its cause, but its proselytes are comparatively few. Would to God they were all re-converted by reason and religion, that they might express their gratitude to heaven, for the blessings they enjoy under the British monarchy, and join hand and heart in its defence against the encroachments of the common enemy. If "England to herself will prove but true," she may defy the world in arms, and preserve her constitution inviolate to the end of time.

"One advantage, my friends, may perhaps be derived from Mr. THELWALL's visit to this town. He may be considered as the touchstone of political opinions. He draws the line between loyalty and disaffection; for I defy any of his adherents, in whom the madness of democracy has not stifled the voice of conscience, to lay their hands upon their hearts,

and say, that they are the real friends to their king, and the constitution of their country.

"With a perfect conviction of the general loyalty and good sense of this town, and with a sincere attachment to its inhabitants, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

"The determined Enemy of Sedition,

"And their faithful Friend and Fellow-Subject."

"August 23d, 1796.

"God save the King."

An abridgement of this bill was inserted in the Norfolk Chronicle and the Norwich Mercury. The latter, however, had the candour readily to insert the following answer in their ensuing paper.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE NORWICH MERCURY.

SIR,

It is evidently the duty of a newspaper to be a vehicle of information, and as it is the business of the conductor to state Facts as they are, according to the evidence he can collect, I take it for granted, that you will disdain to make yourself a party to defamation: and that having been betrayed into a statement in which my name is coupled with several direct falsehoods, you will be eager to do me justice, by inserting my reply.

With respect to the narrative in general, I shall only observe, that it is abundantly disproved by the oaths of credible witnesses; but with respect to that part which relates to the putting out of the lights, I think myself called upon to say, not only that I did not put them out myself, but that, if the writer of the article had ever been in the Lecture Room, he must have known, that it was impossible for me to put them out, as part of them

were not only at a great distance from me, but also considerably out of arm's reach, in point of height; add to which, that the ruffian who committed this part of the outrage, has been identified by a servant of one of the Mr. Hurrys, who has deposed that he saw him knock out the candles with his bludgeon; and that afterwards, when the great doors were burst open, (by which alone the whole company was preserved from massacre) he saw the same fellow dealing his blows upon the women who were shrieking and endeavouring to escape.

Aug. 31, 1796. JOHN THELWALL.



As the Norfolk Chronicle inserted both the accounts, and left the reader to judge for himself between them, I did not think it necessary to take any notice of the circumstance in that paper. All that is to be required of a public print is, that it should be open to both sides of the question, in as much as relates to facts at least. But if the reader is fond of audacious fiction, he may find in the Star, an account still farther removed from truth than that of his "*faithful fellow subject*" above inserted.

Their calumnies and misrepresentations did not, however, turn me from my course. I knew that it was my duty to persevere; and that if I did not finish the course I had promised to deliver, I must show myself unworthy to be a champion of the cause I had espoused, and must expect to be attacked in the same brutal manner wherever I might afterwards attempt to lecture. I therefore

sent a formal notice to the mayor, and continued my course to the end of the time proposed.

This letter, which the reader will find inserted in the address to the people of Yarmouth, produced the following curious hand-bill.

"TO MR. JOHN THELWALL.

"SIR,

"Were you a man of the least humanity or feeling, had you really the welfare of your country or the good of this town, in particular, at heart, your conduct, in the present state of affairs, would have been widely different from what it is. In preference to a continuance of your Lectures, you would, for the sake of the peace and quietness of the place, have retired with a consciousness of having acted the part of a wise and considerate man, whose eagerness to prevent tumult and disorder was far superior to the false ambition of highest applause as a public orator. But how do you act on this trying occasion? Instead of taking steps that would have reflected honour on your understanding and sensibility, you write a most insolent and menacing letter to the Chief Magistrate of the town, publish hand-bills, by no means calculated to appease the passions, or convince the reasons of your opponents, and rather than give up your favourite theme, savagely declare your determination of supporting your Lectures by force of arms. Humane resolution! to risk the plunging of both your country and countrymen in all the horrors of bloodshed and murder. If such be the principles of a Roman orator, in defence of French democracy, I thank my God, I am a poor, but loyal,

"ENGLISHMAN."

"Yarmouth, 24th August, 1796."



How far my readers will acquiesce in the reasoning of this "Englishman;" and how far the conduct he recommends would have furnished

matter of triumphant exultation to the loyal advocates of anarchy and massacre, I must leave them to determine. I shall only observe, that against me, the *charge* of publishing hand-bills was just as true as the accusation that I put out the lights, or, as the assertion that my letter to Sir Edmund Lacon was "insolent and menacing." The hand-bill, signed "a Town's-man," was neither written by me, nor by my desire. I am not a town's-man of Yarmouth; and I am not in the habit of assuming characters which do not belong to me. If I had written it, I should certainly have signed it with my own name; for it would have done honour to any head or any heart by which it might have been dictated. But it appeared to me to be most consistent with decorum, to take no public notice of the affair till my Lectures were concluded, when, of course, I should be better able to decide as to the terms, in which it was proper for me to address the public. In conformity with this resolution, my Lectures were closed on Friday, 26th. I quitted Yarmouth the next day, and returned to the friendly, the intelligent, the beloved society of Norwich; whence, on the Monday following, I wrote the following Address, which has been printed and circulated in the town, where this unprecedented outrage was committed.

Inhabitants of Yarmouth!

Hitherto I have forbore to address you on the subject of the late brutal Outrage; thinking it proper to reserve my animadversions till all

possibility of a repetition was passed away.—I therefore took no other notice of the insult which your town, your police, your persons, and the very character of the nation at large have received, than merely to apprize your Mayor of the contempt with which his authority had been treated by a lawless banditti, and formally to announce the continuance of my Lectures; that, if illegal, *he* might interrupt them by official interference; or, if legal, be prepared to protect me and my auditors against future depredations.

This intimation could not, however, escape the aspersions of calumny: and an anonymous writer, who flanders the nation, by assuming the signature of "*Englishman*," accuses me of "writing a most insolent and menacing letter to the chief magistrate," and "savagely declaring my determination of supporting my Lectures by force of arms." But as of this letter I have, fortunately, preserved a copy, properly attested, I shall here introduce it; that the public may not only judge how far it displays a disposition "to plunge *both my country and countrymen* into all the horrors of bloodshed and murder;" but, by comparing, in this instance, the accusation with the demonstrable fact, may be enabled to determine upon the degree of credit due to the narratives published on the other side of the question. The letter is literally as follows:

"SIR,

"I understand it to be an established principle of British jurisprudence, that the magistracy is bound to protect the citizens in the exercise of every function which the legislature has not prohibited. 'That which the law does not for-

bid, the law authorizes,' is a maxim familiar to every constitutional lawyer: and that the magistrate should protect every man in the enjoyment of his lawful privileges, is evident from the very nature and institution of magistracy. Nay more, as, in civilized society, no unauthorized individual, or set of individuals, is to be permitted to take the law into his own hands, you must be aware, that it is the duty of the magistrate to protect even the supposed violator of the laws from tumultuous attack and murderous violence. It cannot, however, at the time, be a secret to you, that on Friday night last a peaceful assembly of two hundred people (men, women, and children) was attacked in my Lecture Room, by a desperate banditti of about ninety persons, habited like sailors, and armed with bludgeons and cutlasses; who continued their depredations, uncontrouled, for considerably more than an hour, to the great danger of the lives of all, to the actual injury of the limbs of many, and to the considerable loss of personal property.

"I think it, therefore, my duty, formally to apprise you, that, conscious of the legality of my conduct, and *confiding the FUTURE diligence of the civil power*, I shall, this evening, at half past five o'clock, continue my Lectures; a prospectus of which, for your more complete satisfaction, I take the liberty of presenting to you. You will perceive, Sir, by the act of parliament, quoted in this prospectus, that the law has made sufficient provision to secure the admission of magistrates into any place where they may suspect that any thing illegal is going on. In Westminster and in Norwich these hints have not been neglected. In both those places, the Lec-

tures, I am here repeating, have been probed with the most scrutinizing observation: and, in both those places, their admitted legality has secured their protection.

"Trusting that, for the future, the same consequence will follow in this place, I am, Sir, your's, in due respect to the peace and good order of society,

"JOHN THELWALL."

AUG. 22, 1796.

"*To the right worshipful the Mayor of Great Yarmouth.*"

Unprincipled effrontery may call this letter insolent and menacing; and accuse me of a determination "to plunge into the horrors of bloodshed and murder," because I did not flee from the town as soon as the arm of violence was upreared against me: but I trust, that the line of conduct I pursued, has proved at once my eagerness to prevent commotion, and my determination not to be scared, by kidnappers and assassins, from the exercise of those rights, of which it has not yet pleased a corrupt and tyrannical administration to deprive us. At the same time, I have left the Lectures to speak for themselves, to the end, without inflammation on one hand, or concession on the other, that those who had the curiosity, the justice, or the *courage* to enquire or judge for themselves, might perceive how far the sentiments I promulgated, justified, in *any moral sense*, a line of conduct in my antagonists which *the outraged laws of the country* must condemn and punish.

Yes, fellow-citizens, the laws must punish! I speak not in the spirit of revenge: "vengeance

is not mine;" it constitutes no part of my morality: nor shall I, for my individual part, appeal to any tribunal but that of public opinion. But if *those to whom the guardianship of the laws is entrusted*, do not make the offenders responsible for this outrage,—law, and civil justice, and government are no more; anarchy is sanctioned by magistracy itself; pillage and assassination become the order of the day; our houses are no sanctuaries; our persons have no security; every man is warned that the dagger is at his throat, and that he must be prepared, as in times of most savage barbarism, by personal force to defend himself against personal violence.

Think not this language too strong for the occasion: the confessions of the vindicators of this outrage justify it to its utmost syllable. For my own part, I affirm, that the account, inserted in the *Courier* of Monday last, is correct and faithful; and I believe no man of credit or respectability will sign his name to a contradiction of any circumstance there affirmed—unless, indeed, upon accurate examination, the persons, seriously hurt, should prove to be rather more or less than the precise number specified. But suppose, for a moment, that the handbill, published August the 23d,—signed "The determined Enemy of Sedition," &c. an abridgement of which has since found its way into the *Norwich Mercury*—instead of being, as it is, an impudent farrago of designing and atrocious falsehoods, were true from beginning to end, what is the result? Why, that "Lectures on Classical History" are illegal, because the *crimes* of Greek and Roman tyrants (according to this curious vindicator of things as they are) bear so strong a resemblance to the *virtues* of our

present government, that to expose the former, is a libel ("under the specious veil of classical allusion") upon the latter; and therefore it is to be "regretted, that the crew" (a banditti of ninety armed ruffians!) "had not succeeded in *their first design* of securing the lecturer, and pressing him, for a time at least, into the service of his king!"

And how does this "faithful subject," as he calls himself, know what was the "first design" of this banditti? Is he principal, accomplice, or confidential counsellor in this desperate project to kidnap, transport, perhaps *murder*, an individual, who, if he had violated any law, might easily have been brought to justice, without making the captain of a pressgang attorney-general against him, and empannelling eighty or ninety sailors for his jury? If this advocate for kidnapping, this instigator to the repetition of atrocities, hitherto unparalleled, really feels a confidence in the facts and arguments he has advanced, let him stand forward, by name, and avow them; instead of muffling himself from view, in the *fable cloak* of secrecy, and striking, like the ruffians he vindicates, in the dark. Such an avowal might lead, perhaps, to further discoveries relative to the project—so much boasted of by persons who pretend to be as well acquainted with the intentions of the banditti as himself—of impressing me, not into the service of his majesty, but of his majesty's good ally, the empress—of carrying me on board a Russian ship, and transporting me, perhaps, to Siberia.

O madness of profligate malice!—And are these the extenuations upon which our enemies have the impudence to rest their cause? They did not intend, it seems, "to murder two hundred of

the inhabitants of the town :”—they only meant, they say, to kidnap the man who had the audacity (or, as they sometimes call it, the “hypocrisy !”) to illustrate, by facts of ancient history, “The Principles of Legislation, and the Practices of Governments ;” to drag him, with merciless violence, from every endearing tie of relative connection, bury him in a floating hell, or transport him to the inhospitable extremities of a barbarous empire ; there, far from the tears of a helpless wife, and the cries of his little infants, to ponder, at leisure, upon *the equal protection, and equal justice, of the boasted laws of Britain !*

Germans of my love ! sweet nurslings of my care ! know ye the unequal destiny ye are born to ?—Laws are decreed, and halters are prepared to punish you for the least offence which penury, or intemperate passion, might provoke ; but your father may be seized by the rude hand of violence, and your helpless infancy be deprived of its sole support, while ye, poor little orphans ! stretch forth your hands in vain, and the shameless assassins glory in their guilt—secure in the audacious plea, that they meant to murder no man but myself. But no, poor innocents ! ye may yet sport in happy ignorance ; and when the light of knowledge beams on your riper years, ye shall reap the harvest of your father’s toil, and enjoy the protection of just and equal laws !

In the mean time, let Britons reflect upon their situation : for not over me alone, but over the nation, the bludgeon of massacre is reared. If I could be kidnapped, or destroyed in this manner, with impunity, what individual is secure ?—The cruel system of press-warrants has long been de-

cried by every humane and rational man; but, if they can thus be made instruments of political oppression and revenge, *lettres de cachet*, and all the detestable appendages of that old despotism we have been so long labouring to restore in France, were mild, humane and moderate.—I am obnoxious to the present administration.—Nature, I thank thee that thou hast made me so!—and while they act upon their present principles, may the blood flow back to my recreant heart, may mankind loathe, and all animal existence shun me, when I cease to be obnoxious to them!—for their ambition has fallen like a pestilence on man and beast, has undone my country, has desolated Europe; and the four quarters of the globe have groaned under their domination!—But who can answer that he may not, ere long, become obnoxious also to the same, or to some other administration, and be dragged by their myrmidons on board an English or a Russian man of war? To assail the life of *the king* is *only* hanging, drawing, and quartering; but, according to these *loyal anarchists*, to fall under suspicion of satirizing *the minister* by historic fact or “classical allusion,” is to be instant transportation and death.

To the petty falsehoods in this farrago of profligacy and folly, I shall not deign a distinct answer. Some of them contradict themselves; and others have been already contradicted by the oaths of credible witnesses; whose testimony, I understand, will be shortly published *in a court of law*. The stuff about my putting out the lights myself is so contemptible, that I might rest satisfied with observing, that my crime has always been, not the extinction, but the diffusion of light. The fact is, every individual who has ever been

at the lectures knows, that it would have been impossible for *me* to have put out the lights, had I been so disposed; some of them being considerably out of *arm's reach* in point of height, and nearly at the opposite end of the room. It is the misfortune of these *gentlemen* not only to be destitute of all regard to truth, but of that discretion also, which might prompt them to print only such falsehoods as are not easily detected. I leave them, however, to their inventions; while I enjoy the proud confidence of having discharged my duty with firmness and sincerity.

When the minister and his party thought fit, by an act of the legislature, to prohibit me from lecturing any longer "on the laws, constitution, government, and policy of *these* realms," I determined to lecture for the future on the laws, constitution, government, and policy of *other* realms; conscious that the principles of truth may be as well illustrated by the facts of one history, as of another: nor do I see any more "hypocrisy," or want of "manly hardiness," in this, than there would be in continuing to wear one's shirt and breeches, when government had stripped one of one's coat and waistcoat. Unawed by the threats of power, unabashed by the fears or prejudices of my fellow-citizens, I have persevered in this new path, and have proved that the empire of reason, though invaded, is not destroyed: and when, in the last paroxysm of despair, tyrannical Faction appealed to brutal Violence, disdaining alike to imitate, or yield to, the turbulence of my opponents, I have continued my course to the period I had proposed; and am now, in obedience to the calls of duty, and the invitations of friendship, preparing to repeat, in other circles, the important truths

which oppressors may dread, but nations will rejoice to hear.

Inhabitants of Yarmouth! lay these things to heart, and awake to the true interests of humanity!—Let those among you who attended my lectures, bear testimony to the doctrines I have delivered. The tools of corruption and the supporters of priestcraft will naturally be averse to the exposition of such facts as I have felt it my duty to select; and some persons, even of independent and ingenuous minds, may not be prepared to assent to all my principles; for, in the wide ocean of political inquiry, how few can steer exactly in the same track!—but the most prejudiced of my hearers cannot deny, that I have diligently inculcated the doctrines of peace, of public and private virtue, of humanity, justice, and benevolence.

Liberty, I confess, is the deity of my constant adoration; because, I am convinced, that it is by Liberty alone that these principles can be promoted. Feeling this conviction, it is not the imputation of jacobinism, nor the terror of bludgeons and cutlasses, that shall drive me from my course. For defence from the latter, I must trust, as heretofore, to my presence of mind, my courage, the zeal of my friends, and my own good fortune; and as for the former, I can only repeat the sentiment, lately delivered among you, in my digression on the fate of Poland,—“If, by Jacobinism be meant the system of blood and terror, established under the dominion of Robespierre, there is no aristocrat in the nation, who detests Jacobinism with half the ardour which I feel and cherish:—but, if by Jaco-

binism, be intended an attachment to the principles of Liberty—O that I had been a Pole to have died for Jacobinism, and have manured my country with my blood, when I had no longer any other means to do it service!”

JOHN THELWALL.

Norwich, Aug. 29, 1796.

Such are the circumstances of this outrage, as far as they have yet come to light, on the one hand, or as, on the other, the legal enquiry, at this time pending, renders it proper to descend into particulars. A great body of evidence is collected, bringing home many of the facts to some of the actors, and involving others in very strong suspicion; but this I leave to its proper place, and dwell only upon such circumstances as are necessary to give the public a general idea of the atrocity of the attack, and to clear my own character from the aspersions of ruffians, who, having been *twice* disappointed in their attempts to murder myself, in the desperation of their malice, endeavour to assassinate my fame. I trust, however, that both my life and my reputation will weather the storm of their persecutions; but certainly, the latter shall never be sullied, nor the former preserved, by a base desertion of the principles I have espoused, or the voluntary neglect of any opportunity of tearing off the mask of state hypocrisy, and exposing the horrors of tyranny and corruption. And O! that I could rouse the whole intellect of the country to join with me in this important labour! There is no

other way to meliorate the condition of mankind. Misery is diffused through too large a circle—it is too various—too universal to be any longer relieved by the petty detail of private benevolence, or the insolent ostentation of *public charities*. Such palliatives belong to ages of comparative happiness: the evil must now be relieved *en masse*. And how is this to be effected, but by the general diffusion of information? The fabrics of oppression will fall. The cement is exhausted; and already do the disjointed stones begin to totter. Be calm—be watchful and you shall see them fall—fall by their own weight. They want not a single hand to push them down. But if mankind be not informed—if a body of just principles be not widely diffused, what scenes of desolation may arise out of the ruins. Not he then who prevents, but he who promotes, discussion, is the friend of peace and good order. It is the business of the philanthropist at all times, but in such times as these in particular, to instruct, because to instruct is to humanise mankind. Let us seize, then, every opportunity which new laws, and new constructions of the law, have yet left open to imbue the minds of our fellow citizens with the principles of justice, social order and legislation; and, though attorney generals may impeach, and gangs of hired ruffians may assail, let us not be afraid to wield the keen sword of truth, and advance the strong shield of reason. Thus armed, we shall be superior to the malice of our enemies; and death or life be alike the assurance of victory. The worst that can befall us in the struggle is better than the best we can enjoy without it. Once only we can die: and that once is certain. But glorious shall it be for that man, and happy for

his posterity, who falls, however early, in the brave struggle of liberty, rather than prolong a wretched existence in slavery and dishonour, and wait the consuming tortures of disease. In this struggle of reason against oppression, I repeat it— if we discharge our duty, the *victory* is certain: the *price* with which it must be purchased, alone is doubtful. If, in the late *descent of British Pirates upon the British coast*, I had been kidnapped or murdered, as the ruffians designed, tyranny and corruption would not have had an enemy the less. My name and my suffering, my ashes, or my empty tomb, would have been loud and eloquent in the condemnation of the present system: the tears of my widowed wife, and the cries of my little orphans, would have done more than lectures on classical history can hope to do; and outraged humanity would have shrieked through our streets for vengeance. But blood-gorged oppression, drunk with its own ambition, and stung to madness by reiterated disappointments, rushes headlong to its own destruction!

The transaction I have narrated surpasses, it is true, in point of daring wickedness, any thing that has yet been attempted by the tools of *aristocratic Anarchy*; but in its *principle* there is nothing new. “God save the king”, it is true, has been made the war-hoop of tumult and civil commotion; but Birmingham and Manchester, and the theatres of Edinburgh and Lynn, are not yet forgotten. The *hired protectors* of the country have assailed the people with brutal violence, and replied to peaceful argument with the sabre and the bludgeon, while the magistrates have looked on with indifference, unwilling, or unable, to enforce the laws of order and pro-

tection. But has not Mr. Windham, from the Treasury Bench, publicly upheld the anarchic doctrine of exerting an authority beyond the law? * Our coasts have been ravaged by his Majesty's sailors, and the plunder has been carried on board his Majesty's ships, to be divided, in triumph, among the *domestic invaders*; But have not our houses been previously plundered by his Majesty's messengers of books, prints, and manuscripts of all descriptions from the novel and the love sonnet to the physiological dissertation? And have not the privy council refused to restore the plunder to its rightful owners? † Oh! Justice! Justice! thy sword, it seems, is yet keen enough,

* This is not the only instance, in which the language and deportment of the War Secretary have been such, as might easily be *misconstrued* into a commendation of anarchic violence, as the debates of the three last sessions, and the facts, recorded in Holcroft's "Letter," &c. sufficiently prove. I will add one instance more, on the authority of two witnesses, whose testimony, in this respect, it is difficult to discredit. During the Election at Norwich, I was assaulted in an outrageous manner, in the Hall, in the presence of several magistrates, (when no persons but the corporation, and their immediate dependents were present) by a *dignitary of the Church*, several *russian peace officers*, and some *butchers*, apparently brought up stairs for the purpose. These loyal Windhamites, after knocking me twice down, despoiled me of my hat, in the scuffle, which was preserved as a precious trophy, and hung up in the Hall, like the *Spolia Opima* in the Temple of *Jupiter Feretrius*. Mr. Windham, conversing upon the affair the next day, and speaking of me with great bitterness, is said to have fixed his eye upon the hat, and pointing to the tenterhooks on which it was stretched, to have exclaimed, with great emphasis.—"There's a *Part!!!*" Much has been said of Mr. W's. talents, his capacity, and his attainments: but if this anecdote be true, his mind is as degraded, as his politics are detestable. Shylock, wetting his knife, presents not an image of more sanguinary depravity.

† See Correspondence with the Privy Council, at the end of the first vol. of the Tribune.

when greatness would have thee strike! But what is become of thy boasted equal ballance!

But we Reformers ought not to be protected. Laws were not made *for* us—but *against* us! We “have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them!” We reasoners—we members of corresponding societies, and lecturers on classical history—we are turbulent, dangerous men!—commotionists and incendiaries!—promoters of tumult!—foes to the public peace!—patience! patience! when will daring falsehood learn to blush? Have we not met in our thousands, and our tens of thousands? yet when did *we* ever make the least disturbance? Did we not meet in immense crowds at Chalk Farm, and did any tumult ensue?—on the contrary, did not the minister prosecute us for high treason, for quoting passages from the state trials, and constitutional maxims from the very statute books of the realm? And was it not proved by the witnesses for the crown, themselves, that we were advocates for peace and reason? Did we not meet again, in countless multitudes, in St. George’s fields, at Copenhagen House, and in Mary-la-bonne fields? And did we not reason like men, resolve like Britons, and depart again to our respective homes, without even the slightest commotion or disturbance? But when—when I say, has a church and king-mob been assembled without perpetrating crimes and atrocities? When have the tools, the hirelings, the dupes of aristocratic corruption met, in a tenth, a hundredth part of the numbers above alluded to, without marking their progress with pillage, brutal violence, bloodshed, and desolation?

Britons, awake to truth and reason! Learn to distinguish between the real, and pretended friends of peace and good order. Rulers of the land, awake to timely reflection! Abandon the system of terror and persecution. Let justice be more steadily administered; and no longer, by sheltering the perpetrators of *loyal* outrages, (for so is the word abused!) "teach bloody instructions, which being taught, return to plague the inventors."

Bawsey, near Lynn, Sept. 7, 1796.





